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BRONZE "DEITY"
JAPANESE, NARA PERIOD

RECENTLY ACQUIRED OBJECTS OF THE FAR EAST



BAS-RELIEF OF THE HAN PERIOD

Chinese bas-reliefs with carved decorations have been made known mainly through the publications of Chavannes.* During the last few decades, collections of rubbings of these carvings have been made, rubbings such as have always been made in China. Finally, the original reliefs came upon the market, specimens of which are now in the possession of most of the larger museums which have Asiatic collections.

These bas-reliefs were used to decorate the walls of small grave temples or the surface of columns which stood before these temples, at times even the coffins. Our specimen is similar in technique to those on the sepulchres of the Wu family, that is, the background is chiseled out and hatched. The figures and the frame which has been left around the reproduction are left the same height as the original plane of the

stone, in contrast to the other method of treatment where the outlines are engraved and beveled, giving the picture a concave appearance. In both cases the inner drawing is engraved.

All these stone engravings, as they are better called than sculptures or reliefs, were made during the later Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) according to conclusions drawn from various inscriptions. The tomb temple belonging to the Wu family was built in the middle of the second century after Christ (147 A. D.). The main reproduction of our carving (height, 19½ in.; width, 37¾ in.) is used in this tomb in a very similar manner in no less than three different places.† In figure 129 large parts can be seen which are almost identical. In the middle is a tree full of foliage with twisted branches, birds nesting in them and a monkey

*Mission Archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale, Paris, 1909, Text 1913.

†Chavannes, fig. 77, 107-129.

climbing about. It is the Ho-Huan (Accacia Nemu) but nothing further is known about it.* In the shade of this tree there is an unbridled horse, on the opposite side a bird and a two-wheeled cart such as was used in China and Japan by the aristocracy up to the 19th Century. The archers who are aiming at the birds are not on the cart but behind it. As this art shows only the contours of persons and objects in a frame without any perspective or consideration of position, a figure shown above another must be interpreted as being behind it. The group of five persons kneeling above the scene just described has no especial connection with it, as it is separated by a special plane. Figure 129 in Chavannes' article shows a figure standing apart from the others with a brush and paper in his hand which cannot be seen in our carving. At any rate it looks as if this person were receiving the others. The architecture of the structures shown corresponds to that in figure 129 and also the standing and squatting figures in it which express so much movement. In both cases there are two-storied buildings with double roofs. The second roof is borne by mythological beings. It reminds one of the caryatides. They, however, seem to be living and moving and at times are seen in the story of the picture. On the upper roof birds, monkeys and fairies are

seen tumbling about. The meaning of these scenes has not as yet been interpreted, even by Chavannes. Bushell† thought it might be considered the reception of the Emperor Mu Wang by Hsi Wang Mu, "The Royal Mother of the West." Chavannes considers this interpretation unfounded.

Our carving shows inscriptions such as are often found in these works of art. It is possible that they would give an indication of the meaning if they could be deciphered.

The carving is extraordinarily characteristic of this sort of work. In reality they are similar to wall paintings of a purely decorative character, the work of artisans, as the numerous more or less exact repetitions of these motives, even the scenes and various parts of the same, prove. Certain scenes were ordered for the tombs and these were made in a stereotyped way (patterns, casts, etc.). These carvings bear the same relation to the real art of the period as did the Pompeian frescoes to the chief works of the Hellenist and Greek artists. They are of great value as the only specimens of the art of decorative painting of the Han period. A pre-
nance of movement and clear reproduction of the story is the main thing sought. Only the contours speak; the expression and individuality of the faces are of little importance. That reserve and dignity

*Laufer, Chinese Grave Sculptures of the Han period, Paris, London, New York, 1911.
See also Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, Vol. II, pp. 55, 346 and 462.

†Chinese Art, London, 1904, I p. 41.

of gesture which is so characteristic of the Chinese is fully expressed. Reality and legend are mixed here just as in their literature, without any effort at transition. The historical picture in China and the so-called Yanatoye in Japan, as well as the Makimona paintings, remained true to the Han style. It is true that later figures were cut one over the other to show position, and the placing was clearer, but the reproductions never entirely lost their flat character.

BRONZE VESSEL OF THE FIRST MILLENIUM AFTER CHRIST

In the catalogues of the emperors Hui-tsung* and Chien-lung,† there are two vessels similarly formed and decorated which are attributed to the Han period. (Pamphlet XIII and XXI). The Chinese dates mean only that these works cannot be considered as being made before the Han period. In fact it is a form which is a decided contrast to other archaic vessels. Constraint, heavy simplicity and grave seriousness in contour have made way for elegance and freedom, symbolic geometric animal ornamentation for a decora-

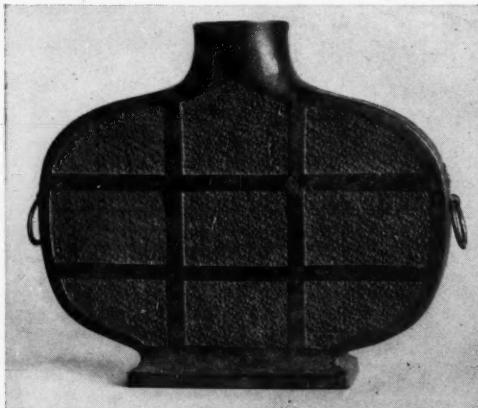
tion of less abstract character. During the first centuries after the birth of Christ there was a great change in Chinese art. There is a transition from antique art to that of the Middle Ages. The Chinese attempts at fixing dates refer only to the types of forms and may be considered as *termini ante quos*. The outline drawings in the catalogues are far from being exact. The dates for the original vessels must be fixed with quite another standpoint in view. It is true that a type of

a form when once discovered never disappears in China, but in the course of centuries and milleniums very fine changes appear which are at times very difficult to distinguish. The contours are weaker, the decoration loses its independence. Besides this, the material, the manner of casting, the chase work made with a file, and above all the patina, offer a basis for calculation. Inscriptions are seldom found with the casts.

Our vessel varies somewhat from the pictures shown in the catalogues. The neck of the bottle is not set off, the form is less flowing, the loops for the rings do not grow out of the

*Po-ku-t'u-lu, 1 edition, 1107 A. D.

†Hsi-ts'ing-ku-chien, 1749 A. D.



body but seem to be set on. It is possible that we have here a bronze of the T'ang period. The East Asian Art Department of the Berlin museums also owns a vessel which is similarly formed but differently decorated.*

BRONZE STATUETTE FROM JAPAN

This little figure belongs, when classed according to its style, to a group of forty-eight bronze statuettes which were taken from the Horyuji temple at Nara for the Imperial treasure and are now exhibited for the most part in the museum in Tokio.† Lately similar bronzes have been found in Korea, and it is very possible and indeed very probable that most of the early Japanese sculptures were imported from Korea to Japan or at least were worked by artists from the continent. At that time Japan was culturally and religiously dependent first on Korea and then upon China. However this may be, the style of all these figures cannot be separated from

that of the Chinese bronzes of the Nor-Wei period (386-534). They are just as characteristic for the Chinese Korean art of the VI Century as for the Japanese of the early VII Century, the period which is known as the Suiko period (593-628). The master is working from the full and deep experience of his soul. Cubic forms are given a delicate show of life. Folds, chains, and ribbons are placed in a stiff symmetry and geometric constraint, hands and feet are incorrectly proportioned. The figures wander about as if in dreams, in a stillness which is far from earth. All movement is limited. It is difficult to say which god is meant. All attributes which might give some indication are lacking. It is probably Kwannon who, together with the historic Buddha in the VII Century, is the god most revered in Asiatic Buddhism.

DR. WILLIAM COHN,
Editor of the Ostasiatische Zeitschrift
(East Asian Magazine).

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The Children's Museum takes pleasure in announcing that, beginning November 7th, there will be a story hour in the Children's Museum Room every Saturday at 3:00 P. M. Miss Ramsey, of Detroit Teachers College, will tell the stories. She has a thorough knowledge of literature, and has had experience in dramatics and story-telling. If the attendance warrants, the stories

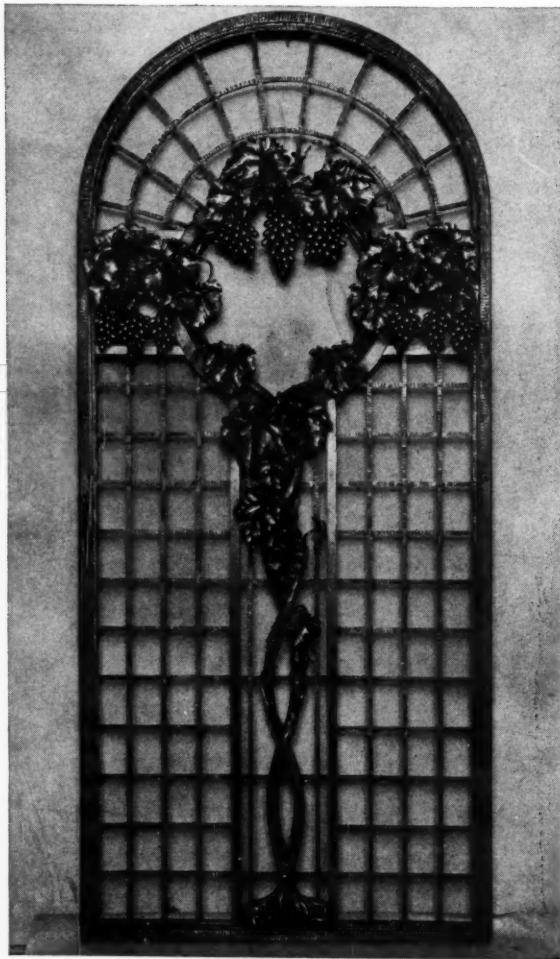
will be repeated at the same hour on Sunday.

The stories selected for each month will be related to the exhibition on view at the time in the Children's Museum Room. In November, for example, when the history of the book, and the book as a work of art, will be on exhibition, the story of "How the Book Was Made" will be told.

*See Otto Kummel, Chinesische Broncen, Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, Vol. VI.

†Compare Kosade Hamada, Sculpture of the Suiko Period, Kokka XXII, p. 519, and Kondo Butsu Shashinshu.

WROUGHT IRON WORK BY EDGAR BRANDT



Mr. George G. Booth has added a new note to the Institute's collection in a group of wrought iron pieces by the French craftsman, Edgar Brandt. The group consists of a grille, a bronze plate, and fifteen wrought iron models for frames, mouldings and architectural ornaments. These reveal a finished craftsmanship, but, with the exception of the grille, are too fragmentary to give an adequate idea of

their adaptability to structural use.

In an article in *Art et Decoration*, written by Jean Locquin, Mr. Brandt is credited with having taken an active part in the Renaissance which has come about in the iron workers' art during the past fifteen or twenty years, after its long period of purely industrial production. Much of his finest work has been building ornamentation—grilles, balconies, stair railings, porte cochères, etc.

LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS

Taking time by the forelock, the Lecture Committee held a series of meetings in the spring, and their plans have been carried out during the summer. We are able to announce that in our lecture course, running from January to March, 1923, will appear such gifted speakers as Charles Bittinger, Royal Cortissoz, Dudley Crafts Watson, Dr. James P. Haney, William M. Ivins, Jr., Henry Turner Bailey, and Frank Jewett Mather.

In addition to this course there will be the Saturday morning Surette classes under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society, Story Hours for children on Saturday afternoons by Miss Eloise Ramsey and a related series of gallery talks on the permanent collections by members of the staff.

There will also be a series of Sunday afternoon lectures illustrated with stereoptican views on history and travel as a background for the appreciation of art. The Sunday afternoon lectures will begin November fifth at three thirty p. m. and will continue until April.

Special exhibitions for the current season promise much of interest. From October tenth to November twelfth the Institute will show in

Gallery III a group of forty-eight paintings and drawings by the Russian painter, Alexandre Evguenievitch Iacovleff. The work of Iacovleff, "an unheard and unsung genius," is marked by a strength of individuality that cannot fail to rouse interest.

An exhibition of etchings by Ernest D. Roth will hang in the Print Galleries during the month of October.

From November twelfth to December first the Thumb Tack Club of Detroit will give its second annual architectural exhibition.

The annual exhibition for Michigan Artists will be held in December as usual. There are a number of competitive prizes.

The paintings and drawings by Nicolas Roerich, the noted Russian artist, about whom much has been heard in recent years, will be shown in January.

In February, through the co-operation of the Carnegie Institute; an exhibition of foreign works from the International Exhibition at Pittsburgh will be held.

In April the Annual Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists will close the exhibition season.

MUSEUM NOTES



TURNING THE FIRST SOD

On June twenty-second the first sod for the new building of the Detroit Institute of Arts was turned with appropriate addresses by Acting Mayor John C. Lodge, President Ralph H. Booth and Vice-President William J. Gray. The excavations are now completed and the structural work of the new building is begun. If the work can proceed without interruption or delay, we hope to be occupying it by January first, 1925.

With much reluctance we were compelled to close the Museum from September twenty-seventh to October tenth for housecleaning, redecorating, and making some structural changes necessary to accommodate recent purchases. With the reopening of the building on October tenth, the regular program of lectures, exhibitions and other activities

mapped out for the winter, will begin.

During the months of November and December, our European expert and adviser, Dr. William R. Valen- tiner, will be in Detroit to advise with reference to the installation and cataloguing of recent acquisitions. A wing on the second floor devoted to these will be open to the public about Christmas time.

Through the gift of Mrs. Eugene B. Gibbs and Mrs. Charles L. Williams, we have come into possession of a collection of early American art objects which will form an important addition to the collections of the Colonial rooms planned for the new building. Mrs. Gibbs has expressed her intention of leaving other important pieces of a similar character as a bequest.